

Freelance technical writer

1989 – present

Technical writer and document designer with over twenty years' experience designing and writing user's guides, programmer's guides, online help, tutorials, computer-based training, reports, design documentation, documentation sets, and books.

Recent Projects

D. E. Shaw Research, New York, NY

2/08 – 5/09

Wrote the *Anton Hardware Guide*, a document describing a supercomputer specialized for molecular dynamics simulations, and companion pieces. In ten months:

- wrote fifteen chapters describing first the underlying concepts and architecture, then each subsystem in detail;
- specified, organized, and wrote ten appendixes providing additional reference information;
- compiled and wrote three instruction set references for special-purpose processors;
- designed and wrote Part 1 of a memory configuration document;
- specified and produced illustrations as necessary.

Wrote the *Desmond User Guide*, a manual for a suite of parallelizable molecular dynamics simulation applications. In two months:

- learned the basic ideas underlying molecular dynamics simulations;
- identified and wrote the missing pieces, including a chapter describing basic concepts (available at www.verbing.com/TechWriting/samples.html);
- extensively reorganized and rewrote three other chapters;
- specified, organized, and produced five appendixes, a preface, and an index;
- reformatted, edited, and reorganized the rest (5 more chapters) as necessary to produce one coherent manual.

Engineering Design Team, Inc., Portland, OR

3/06 – 2/08

Updated the design and wrote or rewrote over two dozen manuals and companion documents for various PCI Bus-based circuit boards and related software and hardware, including:

- setup instructions;
- a feature overview;
- how to use and, in some cases, program the devices;
- register descriptions; and
- pinouts, specifications, and reference information.

These are available at www.edt.com, though some may have been edited since. A sample is available at www.verbing.com/TechWriting/samples.html.

Also, wrote application notes and reports; edited product data sheets; reviewed and critiqued new website design and navigation; and designed and produced templates for documenting manufacturing processes, board-test procedures, and installation and deinstallation (hardware and software on various operating systems).

Saltire Software, Inc., Portland, OR

2/06

In two weeks, learned the use of an application to teach geometry, collaborated on the design of two tutorials, and wrote two tutorials and a user's guide, including an overview of basic concepts

and the way in which the application differs from others in its field.

Also consulted on the user interface and the user interface reference, included in the manual. This manual is available from www.geometryexpressions.com, though it has been edited since. (The original is available at www.verbing.com/TechWriting/samples.html.)

Galois Connections, Inc., Portland, OR

9/05–2/06

Gathered requirements, designed and wrote the *Trusted Services Engine Administrator's Guide* and the *Trusted Services Engine User's Guide*, manuals for a secure multilevel web server with integrated read-down, including:

- an overview of the basic concepts and security features,
- mission-critical installation and configuration instructions,
- instructions for various administration tasks,
- a wide array of reference information, and
- a thorough index.

Also specified illustrations as necessary, worked with QA to identify and characterize bugs, and wrote three white papers on security and functional programming concepts.

Proteome Software, Inc., Portland, OR

4/05–5/05

In four weeks, learned about protein identification using mass spectrometry samples and wrote a 54-page user's guide (available at www.verbing.com/TechWriting/samples.html) for an application that facilitates and enhances this process, including installation and setup instructions, a discussion of the basic concepts, five tutorials (which I helped to design), and reference information.

Also edited marketing material and researched trademark issues.

APCON, Inc., Portland, OR

3/05–4/05

In two weeks, learned the use of a new device and wrote a 48-page user's guide for the Intellapatch 288, a new 288-port physical layer switch, including installation and setup instructions; a feature overview; descriptions of various accessories, including installation and removal instructions; specifications and reference information; and an eight-page index.

In two more weeks, wrote a 96-page guide for a new software interface that provides instructions for 45 distinct tasks and also serves as online help.

Fast-Talk Communications, Inc., Atlanta, GA

9/02–12/02

Wrote a documentation set for software that allows one to search or monitor an audio stream for words or phrases of interest. The set included:

- an installation guide;
- a guide to effective querying;
- a template for describing a variety of language models, and four language-specific model documents;
- quick-start and user guides for the demo and various utilities;
- a programmer's guide for two different sets of functionality, using a single-source document.

I also edited various user interfaces for spelling, clarity, and professionalism.

Computas AS, Oslo, Norway

11/01–5/02

Wrote a programmer's guide for a suite of interoperating frameworks used to program a workflow application, while laying the foundation for a multiplatform single-source document. The guide included:

- a conceptual overview;
- a chapter for each of the workflow, process modeling, and inferencing frameworks;
- a chapter describing how a three-tier application manages distributed data and execution;

- chapters describing additional utilities;
- a bibliography, a glossary, additional reference information, and a two-level index to make it all accessible.

GemStone Systems, Beaverton, OR**1/00–6/00 and 11/00–4/01**

Rewrote a suite of eleven manuals describing GemStone/S, a large, complex object server, and its various interfaces, starting six releases out of date:

- **System Administrator's Guide.** Rewrote chapter on garbage collection, reorganizing and clarifying existing material, and adding descriptions and instructions for significant new functionality. Wrote a new chapter on performance tuning (available at www.verbing.com), organized by performance bottlenecks. Added an appendix describing the use of the performance analysis tools. With developers and Tech Support, specified new sample configuration files. Updated descriptions of configuration parameters, cache statistics, environment variables, and other outdated material.
- **Smalltalk interface manuals** (*two platforms, single source*). Rewrote chapters on replication and connectors. Added an appendix on packaging applications. Reorganized the manual as a whole, corrected several problems with the performance tuning chapter, and updated configuration parameters and graphical user interface information.
- **Tutorial** (*new*). Partnered with an engineer to design and write a tutorial introducing Smalltalk programmers who are GemStone/S novices to key issues of the GemStone/S Smalltalk interface.
- **Server Programmer's Guide.** Improved formatting and clarity, and added new performance tuning material.
- **C Interface Reference.** Determined which of many new functions were useful to customers and added a dozen or so.
- **CORBA Interface manual.** Described new features.
- **Java interface manuals** (*two platforms, single source*). Identified and, with engineering cooperation, corrected a problem in the build process that produced unreadable HTML.
- **General.** Corrected numerous problems with indexes and added significant numbers of new index items to nearly all manuals. Closed all bugs against the manuals (five years' accumulation).
- **Other.** Wrote various sets of release notes, and installation and upgrade instructions, for the object server and various interfaces.
- **Marketing.** To help team prepare for conference, updated product data sheets and wrote marketing success story.

Also, wrote an introduction to the Java-based application server (available at www.verbing.com/TechWriting/samples.html).

Education

Master of Science, Applied Linguistics, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA **1978**
teaching fellowship, 1977–78

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, Reed College, Portland, OR **1975**
Phi Beta Kappa and Commendation for Academic Excellence, 1975

Continuing education

Digital photography – ongoing Italian grammar and conversation – 2003
Graphic design seminar (Edward R. Tufte) – 1996
Spoken Language Systems, Oregon Graduate Institute – 1995
Indexing seminar – 1991
User Interface Design, Portland State University – 1989
Assembler and Computer Architecture, Portland State University – 1985
Pascal, Portland State University – 1984

Skills

Writing

Explain abstract, complex concepts clearly, accurately, and thoroughly. Organize amorphous material to present basic concepts first and then build on them. Write tutorials that help users develop a conceptual framework for fruitful unguided exploration.

Interviewing

Get accurate, thorough information despite tight schedules or introverted communication styles.

Editing

Extensive experience editing my own work and others' so that it's concise, clear, and correct.

Design and Formatting

Structure information in support of a reader's task, using principles of document and information design. Extensive experience implementing designs as FrameMaker, Microsoft Word, or HTML templates for others to use. Familiar with the various uses of online and printed documentation; able to determine when each is appropriate.

Indexing

Create generous indexes so that readers find what they need.

Organization and Scheduling

Can often tell approximately how long a task will take me. Prioritize multiple competing tasks. Switch among tasks to take maximum advantage of team members' availability to avoid impacting schedules. Provide reviewers with targeted, focused material to maximize their effectiveness and minimize review time.

Operating Systems

UNIX (Solaris, others); Mac OS X, 9, previous; Windows (current and common versions)

Applications

Proficient in: Microsoft Word, Adobe FrameMaker, Photoshop, Acrobat, BBEdit, utilities.

Experience with: Robohelp, QuarkXpress

Markup Languages HTML, SGML, troff

Programming Languages

Familiar with concepts and terminology of C, Java, C++, Smalltalk, others

Publications

Digital Woes: Why We Should Not Depend on Software, Addison-Wesley, 1993.

Designing Object-Oriented Software, Prentice Hall, 1990, with Rebecca Wirfs-Brock and Brian Wilkerson.

"SIGSOFT '91: A trip report." ACM SIGSOFT *Software Engineering Notes*, 17:2, pp. 23–38.

"When Two Heads Are Better Than One: Parallel Computing." Software Assoc. of OR *Quarterly News*, 2:1, pp. 4–5.

"Design for Bugs." SAO *Quarterly News*, 1:4, pp. 3–4.

"Object-Oriented Technology: How It Works." SAO *Quarterly News*, 1:2, pp. 11–12.